

Appln. No.: 09/474,642
Amdt. Dated June 14, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated March 12, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for facilitating refunds in a postage metering system, the method comprising the steps of:
receiving at a computer a request for a refund of a postage amount, the request being associated with a postage meter;
using the computer for accessing a dispute account database for identifying a dispute account having a value therein that is indicative of a level of refund activity attributable to the postage meter, the dispute account being associated with the request;
determining, via the computer, if the value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage amount; and
at times when the value is determined to be acceptable for permitting the refund of the postage amount, refunding the postage amount to a user of the postage meter by sending enabling data from the computer to the postage meter, the enabling data useable by the postage meter to add the postage amount to a vault of the postage meter.
2. (cancelled)
3. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising adjusting the value in the dispute account to account for the postage amount refunded.
4. (cancelled)

Appln. No.: 09/474,642
Amdt. Dated June 14, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated March 12, 2004

5. (cancelled)

6. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein at times when the value is determined to be not acceptable, sending a message for one of printing and display at the postage meter, the message advising that the request for a refund has been denied.

7. (currently amended) A postage metering system comprising:
a postage meter having a vault that accounts for postage dispensed by the postage meter and a processor for controlling operation of the postage meter;
a data center in communication with the postage meter, the data center having a central processing unit and a dispute account database, the dispute account database having a dispute account having a value therein that is indicative of a level of refund activity attributable to the postage meter, the dispute account being associated with the postage meter;

means for permitting communication between the postage meter and the data center;

wherein at times when the data center receives a request for a refund of a postage amount for the postage meter the central processing unit determines if the value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage amount and if it is the central processing unit ~~initiates the refunding of~~ refunds the postage amount to a user of the postage meter by sending enabling data useable by the processor for adding the postage amount to the postage meter vault.

8. (cancelled)

9. (currently amended) A postage metering system as recited in claim 8~~7~~, wherein the postage meter further includes a printing device that prints a receipt of the postage amount refunded.

Appln. No.: 09/474,642
Amdt. Dated June 14, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated March 12, 2004

10. (original) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable code for performing the steps of claim 1.
11. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising sending the request from the postage meter to the computer.
12. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the postage meter is remotely located from the computer.
13. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising maintaining a transaction record of the refunding at the computer.
14. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the postage amount correlates to a postage value previously dispensed by the postage meter.
15. (previously presented) A postage metering system as recited in claim 7, wherein the postage meter sends the request to the data center and the postage amount correlates to a postage value previously dispensed by the postage meter.
16. (previously presented) A postage metering system as recited in claim 7, wherein the postage meter is remotely located from the data center.
17. (currently amended) A method for facilitating refunds in a postage meter, the method comprising the steps of:

Appln. No.: 09/474,642
Amdt. Dated June 14, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated March 12, 2004

receiving at the postage meter a request for a refund of a postage amount;
accessing a dispute account in the postage meter to determine if a value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage amount, the value indicative of a level of refund activity attributable to the postage meter; and
at times when the value is determined to be acceptable for permitting the refund of the postage amount, refunding the postage amount to a user of the postage meter by adding the postage amount to a vault of the postage meter.

18. (cancelled)

19. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein at times when the postage meter communicates with a remote data center sending a message from the postage meter to the data center to initiate the refunding of the postage amount to the user.

20. (currently amended) A postage meter comprising:
a processor that controls operation of the postage meter;
a vault that accounts for postage dispensed by the postage meter;
a dispute account having a value therein, the value indicative of a level of refund activity attributable to the meter;
wherein at times when the postage meter receives a request for a refund of a postage amount the processor determines if the value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage amount and if it is the processor ~~initiates the refunding of the postage amount to a user of the postage meter~~ by adding the postage amount to the vault.

Appln. No.: 09/474,642
Amdt. Dated June 14, 2004
Reply to Office Action dated March 12, 2004

21. (cancelled)